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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 July 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Leinarte

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined fifth to eighth periodic reports of Barbados (CEDAW/C/BRB/5-8; CEDAW/C/BRB/Q/5-8 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Barbados took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that the Constitution of Barbados gave equal protection to all citizens and no law could be enacted that was inconsistent with the rights under the Constitution. Such principles had informed the policies of successive administrations since independence and helped provided a framework for women and girls to fulfil their potential and realize their rights.

3. The role of women and girls in building the nation, achieving economic advancement and securing social progress had contributed significantly to the high levels of sustained investment, despite the challenges faced as a small island developing State. The Government was committed to working with the international community to address issues of discrimination and violence against women. Women were the backbone of society and had major roles to play as teachers in educational institutions and as the repositories of wisdom in homes and communities. Barbadian women were represented in business, engineering, the civil service, the judiciary and politics. According to estimates for 2017, some 144,000 of the population was female and 133,000 male. The Government was investing in key sectors, such as social care, education, health and housing, to enhance women's and girls' development, despite the economic situation. In 2016, the economy of Barbados grew by 1.6 percent compared with 0.9 percent in 2015.

4. While there were reasons for optimism, fiscal discipline was still required owing to challenges, such as the slow progress of the fiscal consolidation efforts and the high debt burden. During periods of economic disruption, it was all the more important to strengthen social services. The network of social services to provide support and protection, particularly for women, included the poverty eradication fund of the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development, which had been set up to provide financial assistance for housing, education and health care, the Identification, Stabilization, Enablement and Empowerment (ISEE) Programme, which offered psychosocial support to households and under which around US$ 95,000 in benefits had been paid out in 2016 and the National HIV/AIDS Commission, which provided school supplies and nutrition.

5. That Commission worked in cooperation with other ministries and public bodies to assess housing needs and identify persons requiring priority assistance. In Barbados, health care was free for all citizens and free, compulsory education was provided for children between 5 and 16 years of age. More girls than boys obtained scholarships at the secondary school level and at the tertiary level, where higher numbers of women than men attended and graduated from university. The 2016 amendments to the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act had established a wider definition of domestic violence, enhanced the police's power to intervene in situations of suspected domestic violence and expanded the application of the Act to couples in visiting relationships. Despite significant progress to date, much work remained to be done to ensure the well-being of Barbadian citizens by upholding human rights.

Articles 1 to 6

6. **Ms. Schulz** said that she found it regrettable that the report only covered the situation until 2012 and that the replies to the list of issues were sent late. She was concerned that some of the gravest problems addressed in the previous dialogue had yet to be addressed. With regard to constitutional issues, she asked whether the Government was aware that the failure to list sex among the grounds on which discrimination was prohibited in section 23 (2) of the Constitution reflected poorly on the legal system. She asked when a definition of sex discrimination in keeping with article 1 of the Convention might be

included in the Constitution. She wished to know whether there were plans to amend the Constitution to provide for protection against discrimination for foreign women, who were not afforded the same protections as citizens.

7. She asked whether the Government envisaged implementing the recommendations of the 1998 report of the Barbados Constitution Review Commission to bring the Constitution into line with international human rights standards, whether the Constitution would be revised to include the grounds of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age and disability in protection against discrimination and what the time frame of such amendments would be. She asked whether plans to introduce a republican form of government still stood and, if so, whether the Government would take advantage of that occasion to expand protections against discrimination.

8. Turning to legislative issues, and expressing concern at the lengthy legislative processes, she asked whether the Government might consider drafting and presenting to Parliament an omnibus bill on the full incorporation of the Convention into national law. If that was not an option, she wondered whether bringing sectoral laws into conformity with the Convention piecemeal might be presented to Parliament as a matter of priority, particularly legislation on gender equality incorporating article 1 of the Convention.

9. With regard to access to justice, she asked whether there were plans to give first priority to the establishment of family courts and to courts and other mechanisms dealing with violence against women and girls. She wondered whether there was a time frame for the introduction of the family court, referred to by the Attorney General in June 2017, having jurisdiction throughout the island to hear matters related to family arrangements at the magisterial and High Court level. She asked whether priority would be given to providing the courts with the necessary resources to hear new cases and reduce the existing backlog and to training judicial officers, lawyers, the police and social and medical professionals to ensure they adopted a gender-sensitive approach to their work. How did the Government intend to improve the population's levels of legal literacy on women's rights and their awareness of the Convention?

10. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that, while the Government was aware of the impression that might be left by the omission of sex in section 23 of the Constitution as a prohibited ground of discrimination, sex was covered in section 11. His Government had implemented around 200 recommendations on gender equality since 1976. The policy on gender equality, which would be presented to the Cabinet shortly, contained a recommendation to bring section 23 of the Constitution into line with section 11 by extending the prohibition in section 23 to discrimination based on sex, gender, marital status and pregnancy. The policy on gender equality also provided for data collection to assess the follow-up to complaints handled by the Office of the Ombudsman relating to gender inequality and the effectiveness of measures, such as media and education campaigns, to address gender stereotypes.

11. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that an external review of legislation on family issues was being carried out to identify gaps and make recommendations. The family court would be established shortly. Training of judicial officers was provided within the context of the Justice Improvement Project and the national gender policy. The Supreme Court had been relocated, refurbished and equipped with information and communication technology resources.

12. **Ms. Schulz** asked what specific additional mechanisms would need to be in place for Barbados to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention and how many years would be required to establish those mechanisms. She also asked whether assessments of the impact of the country's tax haven status on the advancement and rights of women both domestically and internationally were conducted.

13. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that, following a legislative review, the Attorney General had determined that further amendments to the law would be necessary before Barbados could sign the Optional Protocol.

14. **Ms. Bethel**, noting that, in 2015, the State party had ranked 22 in the Financial Secrecy Index of the Tax Justice Network, said she would be grateful for information on

the Government's commitment to international tax cooperation and the impact that such a commitment had on the capacity to mobilize tax revenues for the advancement of women's rights at the domestic and international level.

15. **Mr. Gibbs** (Barbados) said that his Government was making efforts to demonstrate to the international community transparency in tax matters under its jurisdiction. The decrease in national revenue had had an indirect impact on all citizens given that resources had had to be reallocated among various sectors in what had already been challenging circumstances. Vulnerable groups were nevertheless prioritized.

16. **Ms. Bethel** said that, notwithstanding the many government initiatives taken to address gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women, such as the national policy on gender, training for public authorities and public awareness-raising about the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community, alternative sources suggested that efforts to build on those initiatives were minimal, short-lived or ineffective. She would appreciate it if the delegation could comment on those assertions. She asked whether a human rights-based approach had been employed to ensure that new taxes, such as value added tax and the national social responsibility levy, and relevant laws and policies were not at variance with the State party's international human rights obligations and the Convention and whether an assessment was carried out of the impact of those taxes on women living in poverty.

17. With regard to the Bureau of Gender Affairs, she asked what was the budget allocation for the Bureau and its percentage of the general national budget, what decision-making capacity did the Bureau have in the government structure, what role did the Bureau play in the implementation of policies and identification of legal gaps regarding de facto discrimination and inequality and how did the Bureau grapple with the reported backlash against measures to improve equality gender that was prevalent in Barbados.

18. She would welcome information on the status of the national policy on gender and the road map, calendar and budgetary allocations for its implementation. She asked whether the policy provided for the Bureau's full authority and capacity to promote the advancement of women and for effective gender mainstreaming in all governmental activities at the national and local levels. She would like information on plans to strengthen institutional services for women and disseminate information on the services and programmes provided by the Bureau, particularly outside the capital.

19. Turning to other national mechanisms, she asked what measures had been taken to incorporate a gender perspective into the work of the Office of the Ombudsman, what the timeline was for the establishment of a national human rights institution and what inter-institutional coordination mechanisms and capacity-building programmes were in place to ensure harmonization of the measures implemented by the various institutions, including the Bureau of Gender Affairs, the national human rights institution and the Office of the Ombudsman. She would like to know to what extent civil society, including the academic community, and the media were engaged in the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex. Lastly, she asked what initiatives had been undertaken to collect statistical and qualitative information that could be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, rural or urban origin, among other variables, in all official and non-official reports and studies.

20. **Ms. Nadaraia**, referring to paragraph 40 of the periodic report, said that it was unclear whether the initiatives implemented by the State party to promote gender equality could be considered to be temporary special measures. Drawing the delegation's attention to article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 on temporary special measures, she would be interested to know whether the State party had introduced any temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between women and men, particularly in areas in which women were disadvantaged or underrepresented, including in political processes, decision-making positions and male-dominated sectors of employment. She also wished to know whether the State party planned to conduct any awareness-raising campaigns to help public officials understand the meaning and scope of temporary special measures and whether it intended to extend the use

of such measures to encompass disadvantaged groups of women, such as rural women, women with disabilities and LGBT women.

21. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that, despite the austerity measures implemented by the Government in the wake of the global economic crisis, efforts had been made to maintain social welfare budgets at an adequate level to ensure that persons most in need could still rely on State assistance. While the unemployment rate was currently hovering at around 9 per cent, many of the persons laid off at the height of the crisis had since re-entered the labour market.

22. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that the Bureau of Gender Affairs had a small but very efficient staff that, unfortunately, was not always able to execute its broad mandate on its own. For that reason, it had developed strategic partnerships with, among others, the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, the National Organization of Women and women's and men's business groups. Activities to promote and raise awareness about gender equality were carried out in conjunction with the national media and churches, civil society and schools at the local level. The Bureau also disseminated information on specific issues, such as domestic violence, and sought to inform the public about its work and mandate. Lastly, the Government had established a family conflict unit with the aim of collecting data on the incidence of domestic violence in the country. The Bureau was currently working with the Office of National Statistics to define relevant data indicators in that regard.

23. **Mr. Gibbs** (Barbados) said that, while the overarching goal of any national budget was to ensure stability and promote growth, consideration was always given to ensuring that the most vulnerable members of society were protected, even during straitened times. In so doing, the Treasury was, to some extent, automatically seeking to protect women and improve their circumstances.

24. **Mr.** Jeffrey **Kellman** (Barbados) said that education was the key to empowering women and lifting them out of poverty. Several poverty alleviation projects had been launched, including the Identification, Stabilization, Enablement and Empowerment Bridge programme, which had received a US$ 10 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank in order to tackle intergenerational poverty and reduce unemployment through training.

25. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would be grateful for a reply to her questions concerning the budget allocated to the Bureau of Gender Affairs, in particular as a percentage of the national budget. She would also be interested to learn about how the Bureau's array of partnerships and initiatives had transformed the lives of women in Barbados. It would be helpful to know what specific impact the austerity measures had had on social programmes aimed at empowering women in the long term and preventing a culture of dependency on public assistance. She wondered whether a ministry responsible for social protection measures was the right government department to handle gender issues.

26. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development sought to discourage a culture of dependency on government welfare benefits for a prolonged period of time. The ISEE programme, for example, aimed to take a comprehensive approach to tackling the root causes of poverty, thereby empowering some 250 households, many of which were headed by women, to improve their situation.

27. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that the results of the collaboration between the Bureau and civil society organizations, for example, had helped to draw public attention to the issue of domestic violence and empower women by raising awareness and providing them with the tools necessary to take action. Similarly, through its partnerships with business groups, the Bureau had held workshops aimed at building women's self-esteem and giving them the confidence to pursue successful careers.

28. **Ms. Cuffy** (Barbados) said that the University of the West Indies had been a long-time partner of the Bureau of Gender Affairs. The University took steps to raise awareness of gender issues among its student population as a matter of course and undertook gender

research, which had helped support the Bureau in developing relevant programmes and activities.

29. **Mr. Gibbs** (Barbados) said that the Government had adopted a dual approach to the issue of social welfare: it ensured that State support was available to help persons when they most needed it and created the necessary structures to empower such persons to support themselves in the future. By way of example, one of the critical components of the Ministry of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development portfolio was to foster the establishment of small and micro enterprises and provide sector-specific training, such as for the tourism industry. A large proportion of said training opportunities were taken up by women.

30. **Ms. Acar**, referring to article 5 of the Convention, said that patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender stereotypes still prevailed in Barbados, despite the fact that women outnumbered men. She wished to know what specific action was being taken by the State party to change societal attitudes, eliminate discriminatory laws, raise awareness of the Convention and recent legislative changes and combat all forms of gender-based violence, which, by all accounts, was a serious problem in Barbados. In that connection, it would be helpful to have specific data on cases of violence against women, including reporting and prosecution rates, and details of any court decisions, particularly with respect to women from disadvantaged groups. It seemed that training for law-enforcement professionals was inadequate; for instance, reports suggested that, when responding to complaints of domestic violence, police officers often blamed the victim. In that light, she wondered what was being done to improve training and change mindsets not only in the police force but also in the judiciary and other public services. Lastly, she asked what steps were being taken to counter the public backlash against measures aimed at promoting gender equality.

31. **Ms. Bethel**, while commending the adoption in 2016 of the Trafficking in Persons Prevention Act, said that she wished to know what time frame was envisaged for the introduction of the draft national policy on human trafficking mentioned in paragraph 48 of the State party's replies to the list of issues and what specific areas that policy covered. Notwithstanding the progress made by the State party, the trafficking of women, children and undocumented migrants for the purposes of labour or sexual exploitation remained a matter of serious concern. Moreover, the Government had failed to provide adequate resources to State agencies and NGOs for training or furthering anti-trafficking efforts and for the care of victims. In that light, she would like to know what human and financial resources the State party had allocated in order to investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking, including cases not involving international migration, and to convict and punish perpetrators. She wished to know how many cases involving trafficking of women and girls had been investigated and prosecuted and what penalties had been imposed on perpetrators, what were the functions of the special trafficking unit of the police force referred to in the periodic report and what was the status of the draft protocol, policy and procedures manual for victims of trafficking, which had been in the pipeline since 2008. In a similar vein, she asked what measures had been taken or were envisaged to raise greater awareness about human trafficking, particularly in low-income urban areas, ensure adequate protection and assistance for women and girl victims, set up and provide resources to specialized shelters for victims of trafficking, including children, enhance victim-identification procedures and provide comprehensive referral services for all victims of that offence. She also wondered how the State party intended to intensify efforts to investigate, prosecute and convict child sex tourists and whether there were plans to increase training on human trafficking for members of the police, the prosecution service and the judiciary.

32. Turning to the issue of prostitution, she asked whether steps had been taken to address the root causes of prostitution, including poverty, that made women and girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking, what plans were in place to ensure that women in prostitution had access to health and social services and what measures had been implemented or were envisaged to empower women who wished to leave prostitution and help them to reintegrate into society. Since prostitution was illegal in the country, she wished to know whether data could be provided on the number of women who had been prosecuted and punished for prostitution and men for pimping or paying for sex, and the sentences imposed, whether demand for prostitution had increased as a result of the tourist

industry and whether the State party had given any consideration to decriminalizing prostitution.

33. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that the national policy on trafficking had been submitted to the Cabinet Subcommittee on Social Policy, which had issued a report containing a set of recommendations. The Bureau of Gender Affairs was currently in the process of revising the policy document to bring it into line with those recommendations. The Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development had engaged a consultant with a view to reviewing family law and identifying any discriminatory language in it that should be removed. The Bureau had worked with women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN-Women in order to raise awareness of domestic violence and the ways in which victims could seek redress. The subject of domestic violence had been included in the curriculum followed by trainee police officers and steps had been taken to change the way in which police officers communicated with victims of domestic violence.

34. **Mr. Gibbs** (Barbados) said that, in accordance with the national policy on gender, the Government would be posting guidelines on trafficking in persons in strategic locations in order to deter traffickers and inform the public of how to assist victims. The police force and the Immigration Department collaborated with the Customs and Excise Department to identify victims of trafficking in persons. Steps would be taken to raise awareness of the fact that male and female victims of trafficking were at risk of being forced into prostitution and other forms of labour exploitation. The Government would be working with other Caribbean Community member States in order to enhance its ability to combat human trafficking. The appropriate rehabilitation services were being set up for male and female victims of trafficking.

35. **Ms. Acar**, commending the State party on the adoption of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, said that she wished to know what steps had been taken to raise public awareness of the fact that the definition of rape had been broadened to cover a husband who had sexual intercourse with his wife without her consent. She asked whether any cases involving marital rape had been brought before the courts and, if so, whether judgments had been issued in respect of those cases. Lastly, it would be helpful if the delegation could confirm that the sole shelter in operation in the State party was not exclusively reserved for women victims of violence.

36. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that the Government had taken steps to raise awareness of the amendments to the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act by conducting outreach programmes and discussions with men's groups. Steps to raise awareness of the redefinition of marital rape had not yet been taken. The sole shelter that existed in Barbados, which was never full, served to support women victims of violence and women victims of trafficking in persons. The International Organization for Migration supported the Government in its efforts to repatriate victims of trafficking who were nationals of other States.

37. **Mr.** Ricardo **Kellman** (Barbados) said that, during the universal periodic review of Barbados conducted in 2008 (A/HRC/10/73), the State party had indicated that it would explore the possibility of establishing a national human rights institution. In 2013, the Government had stated that it would take steps to establish such an institution through the Office of the Ombudsman, which would take responsibility for investigating alleged human rights violations, including those pertaining to women. However, it had subsequently become apparent that the process of broadening the scope of the Office of the Ombudsman would have implications for various pieces of legislation. Consequently, the Government had established a National Human Rights Coordinating Committee to discuss and examine the implications of establishing a national human rights institution. It was not yet possible for the delegation to state when such an institution might be established.

38. The Government had taken significant steps to train law enforcement officials in gender-related issues. Complaints had been received about the way in which the police force communicated with victims of domestic violence and, as a result, a family conflict unit had been established to train police officers in dealing with women and child victims of violence. Such training had also been provided to members of the judiciary, teachers and

civil society actors. The draft policy on gender, in which emphasis was placed on the importance of awareness-raising in efforts to promote the rights of women, had been developed in collaboration with members of civil society in order to promote gender equity and gender equality.

Articles 7 to 9

39. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that, in view of the low representation of women in Parliament and ministerial posts, she asked whether the State party would consider measures to raise the proportion of female Members of Parliament to at least 30 per cent, to support women candidates for elected positions and to promote the equal representation of women and men in leadership and decision-making positions at all levels and in all areas of political and public life. Although a consensus had yet to be established on the introduction of a quota system, two major political parties had organized lectures and training sessions to encourage women to participate in politics. She asked whether funding, additional media coverage or other incentives were given to political parties to encourage them to promote women to senior positions within party structures and to increase the visibility of women candidates during election campaigns.

40. Noting that the State party report had mentioned a number of regional and national training activities intended to promote the participation of women in politics, she asked whether those activities had achieved that goal or the goal of promoting legislative and policy changes that would lead to the introduction of a quota system. In particular, she wished to know whether the training initiatives mentioned in the report had resulted in the increased participation of women in the elections held in 2013. The Committee would welcome further information on the number of women who held diplomatic and consular positions abroad, including the number of women who were ambassadors, high commissioners and representatives to international and regional organizations.

41. **Ms. Schulz**, noting that, during the universal periodic review of Barbados in 2013, the State party had accepted the recommendation concerning the equal treatment of mothers' and fathers' right to transfer their nationality to their children, said she wished to know whether, under articles 5 (1) and 5 (2) of the Constitution, Barbadian women who had not been born in Barbados could not automatically transfer their nationality to children born outside of Barbados. Given that foreign women who married male Barbadian citizens could acquire Barbadian nationality on request, but that foreign men who married women Barbadian citizens could not do likewise, she asked whether the State party would consider amending the Constitution and the Citizenship Act to provide men and women with an equal right to transfer their nationality to foreign spouses and to their children, irrespective of where they or their children had been born.

42. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that, as the Committee had indicated, no consensus had been established on the question of introducing quotas in the political system. The participation of women in local politics was addressed at the level of constituencies, where suitable candidates for election were proposed by their peers on the basis of their character, suitability for office, and record of engaging in community work, among other factors. Every Barbadian citizen had an equal right to seek public office in accordance with that process. Currently, out of a total of thirty Members of Parliament, one woman held a position in the Government and four women held positions in the parliamentary opposition. Women also occupied three very important political positions, namely, the positions of Leader of the Opposition, President of the Senate and Leader of Government Business in the Senate. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was also a woman. Although it was probably the case that the majority of diplomatic positions were currently held by men, the gender balance in the diplomatic service shifted in and out of favour of men and women over time.

43. **Ms. Cuffy** (Barbados) said that the Government was committed to ensuring that men and women participated equally in political life. In order to encourage young people to participate in the political system and learn about how that system worked, the Government had established the Barbados National Youth Parliament and conducted a number of training sessions aimed at persons aged from 14 to 21.

44. **Mr.** Jeffrey **Kellman** (Barbados) said that Barbadians who were born overseas could automatically acquire Barbadian citizenship. In accordance with the Constitution and the regulations of the Immigration Department, children born to Barbadian women who were married to foreign men were also able to acquire Barbadian citizenship. If he, as a Barbadian citizen, lived in Switzerland and had children and grandchildren in Switzerland, those children and grandchildren would be able to acquire Barbadian citizenship.

45. **Ms. Schulz** said that any children of Mr. Kellman's who were born in Switzerland would be able to acquire Barbadian citizenship because he was a man. However, article 5 of the Constitution, the relevant articles of the Citizenship Act and the explanations provided in the periodic report and the replies to the list of issues indicated that the State party's legislation on nationality contained discriminatory provisions.

46. **Mr.** Ricardo **Kellman** (Barbados) said that men and women now had an equal right to transfer their nationality automatically to their children. The law now provided for equal access to citizenship for all children born to Barbadian citizens, irrespective of whether those citizens were male or female. Four out of a total of 13 heads of mission were women and 70 per cent of the total number of positions in the foreign service were held by women.

47. **Ms. Schulz** said that, according to the replies given by the delegation in relation to the question of the transfer of nationality, the Government's legislation or practice had moved beyond what was specified in the Constitution, which was the supreme law of the nation.

48. **Mr.** Ricardo **Kellman** (Barbados) said that the rights enshrined under Constitution were further strengthened by a body of laws and jurisprudence. The rules concerning citizenship had been changed to ensure that men and women had an equal right to transfer citizenship to their children.

49. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would be grateful if the delegation could indicate whether a constitutional amendment that granted men and women an equal right to transfer citizenship to their children had been introduced. It was still not clear whether the Constitution granted foreign men and women an equal right to acquire Barbadian nationality when they married a Barbadian citizen.

Articles 10 to 14

50. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she commended the State party on the fact that girls and women had equal access to all levels of the education system, that free education was provided to all Barbadians from the nursery to the secondary school level, that more than twice as many girls than boys were enrolled in the three main institutions of tertiary education and that girls and women outperformed men and boys at the secondary and tertiary levels. However, she was concerned to note that, despite the progressive decline in the teenage pregnancy rate since the introduction of universal free education, the rate of babies born to teenage mothers had been 44 per 1,000 live births in 2015, which was higher than the average rate of 18 per 1,000 live births for countries with a similar level of development. Although no law or policy prevented pregnant students from remaining in education, the stigma attached to pregnant girls meant that they were often compelled to leave school, after which they tended not to return. In principle, schools were expected to support students who became pregnant, although there was no general written policy on the procedure to be adopted by schools in such situations. In view of the situation outlined, she asked what was the dropout rate for girls who became pregnant, what was the dropout rate for students who left school for other reasons, what measures were in place to ensure that pregnant girls received support and were not expelled from school, how many school administrators had been punished for expelling pregnant girls on a discretionary basis, whether policies enabling pregnant girls to return to school would be implemented and whether the policies referred to in the State party report (para. 123) would be implemented to keep pregnant girls in school.

51. The Committee would welcome information on the progress made towards the development of universal, rights-based, mandatory and comprehensive sex education that addressed issues of power and responsible sexual behaviour and paid special attention to the prevention of pregnancy. In view of the fact that the State party had implemented a

schools' positive behaviour management programme, she asked why it had rejected the recommendations to prohibit all forms of corporal punishment of children that were made during the universal periodic review of Barbados in 2008 and in the second review cycle of 2013. She wished to know what barriers the State party had encountered in its efforts to abolish corporal punishment, whether it would reconsider its position on the matter in view of the fact that, as had been mentioned earlier in the dialogue, victims of violence in one sphere of life could become violent themselves in other spheres and whether the State party would consider the disproportionate impact that corporal punishment had on girls.

52. Noting that girls were required to obtain higher scores than boys in the secondary school entrance examination, she asked whether that requirement was set down in law and whether it might discourage girls from studying and place them under undue pressure. She would appreciate it if the delegation could comment on the fact that, even after repeated attempts, most male and female students failed to obtain four passes in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate, which were required for entry into the civil service. Noting that the results obtained by students largely depended on their social class, she asked whether the State party had examined the link between gender and social class and what steps were being taken to address class differences in academic performance.

53. Students who enrolled in programmes offered by the Barbados Vocational Training Board continued to opt for traditional, gender-segregated subjects. Noting that the replies to the list of mentioned a number of initiatives intended to address the gender imbalance in the subjects chosen by students, she asked whether those initiatives had been undertaken, particularly those set out in the national policy on gender. She asked what the increase had been in the number of women who opted to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics, whether temporary special measures been used to address the gender imbalance in subject choices and, if so, what the outcome of those measures had been. The Committee would welcome further information on initiatives taken by the State party in the areas of special needs education.

54. **Mr. Bergby** said that, although there were no legal barriers to women's participation in the labour market, their participation rate was only 64 per cent, compared to 76 per cent for men. Moreover, the average unemployment rate for women tended to be higher than that of their male counterparts. He asked what measures the State party envisaged taking to increase women's participation in the labour market. He would also like to receive sex-disaggregated statistical data on unemployment over the period 2010-2016 and on women's participation in the different programmes in place to increase access to employment for job-seekers. He asked whether the State party had measured the impact of those programmes on the employment rate of women.

55. Despite the recent increase in women choosing to exercise professions traditionally dominated by men, as a general rule, established patterns of employment had changed very little. The delegation might provide the Committee with statistical data illustrating the impact of the education programmes introduced to encourage women to make non-conventional career choices. What other measures did the State party intend to take to increase women's employment in industries that had been regarded as the preserve of men?

56. Noting that the principle of equal pay for equal work was enshrined in Barbadian employment law and largely adhered to in the public sector, he asked whether the State party also applied the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. According to a study, male public sector workers earned, on average, 18 per cent more than their female counterparts. It therefore stood to reason that the gender pay gap was far wider in the private sector. He asked what measures the State party intended to take to ensure compliance with those principles in all sectors. He found it regrettable that the Labour Department had been unable to provide sex-disaggregated data on wages owing to the refusal of private sector employers to supply such information, being under no legal obligation to do so. The absence of such data made it difficult to identify the causes of the pay gap and to prevent further discrimination. He asked how the State party planned to obtain the data on public and private sector wages requested by the Committee.

57. In Barbados, some 40 per cent of women were considered to be economically inactive, devoting themselves to child-rearing and other family duties. It would be useful if

the delegation could provide statistical data on women's participation in the informal labour market. He asked what steps the State party had taken to guarantee those women access to health-care and social services. He would also like to receive sex-disaggregated statistical data on the number of children engaging in paid work to supplement their family's income.

58. Sexual harassment in the workplace often prevented women from enjoying their employment rights on an equal footing with men. Noting that the sexual harassment (prevention) bill and a draft policy and legislative framework to combat sexual harassment developed by the Ministry of Labour had been pending for some time, he said that it would be useful to hear more about challenges and impediments preventing their adoption and whether a time frame for their adoption had been set.

59. Men, too, had child-rearing obligations and should be given the opportunity to take parental leave. He asked whether the State party planned to grant women additional paid leave and to introduce special paternity leave to promote the active participation of fathers in child-rearing.

60. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that Barbados had a long history of working with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to advance women's rights and had succeeded in bringing about significant improvements in the situation of women's health in the country. However, the Committee remained largely uninformed about the impact of the austerity measures adopted in the years following the global economic crisis on women's health-care services and sexual and reproductive health indicators. She asked how the State party had reorganized health-care services in the new economic climate and how it ensured consistency in the provision of such services in the public and private sectors. She also wished to know whether the State party planned to allocate a separate budget for women's health-care services, such as maternity care services, cancer screening services, contraception programmes and programmes to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

61. It would be interesting to have an account of the full range of sexual and reproductive health services available to adolescents in Barbados, including any age-appropriate information and guidance services promoting responsible sexual relations. It would also be useful to hear more about the sex education provided in schools and the services available to teenage mothers. The prohibition of prostitution only served to marginalize women engaging in that practice and to place them at greater risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease such as HIV/AIDS. She asked whether there were health-care programmes in place to assist female prostitutes. She would also like to know whether the non-recognition of same-sex relationships in Barbados constituted a barrier to lesbian, bisexual and transsexual women receiving treatment at health-care facilities. How did the State party prevent medical personnel from refusing to provide treatment to women on the grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity?

62. The paucity of statistical data on HIV/AIDS made it difficult for the Committee to follow the evolution of the HIV transmission rate among women in Barbados. It would be helpful to know whether the HIV prevalence rate was higher for men or for women and whether specific activities to prevent its transmission had been conducted. She asked how the State party intended to guarantee girls and adolescents with disabilities access to education and sexual and reproductive health-care services and to prevent their forced sterilization in medical facilities.

63. **Mr.** Jeffrey **Kellman** (Barbados) said that, under Barbadian law, all children had free access to education up to the age of 16 years. Teenage mothers were therefore entitled to continue their studies in the school of their choice. Parents had the right to choose the secondary school that their children attended, often doing so on the basis of geographical location, as the public transport network was not extensive. Girls were required to achieve higher scores than boys in the Barbados secondary school entrance examination in order to preserve the gender balance in the country's top co-educational schools, as girls tended to outperform boys in the examination and could go on to occupy a disproportionate number of places. The Minister for Education had expressed his desire for corporal punishment to be abolished in all schools in Barbados and intended to revise the existing policy on corporal punishment to that end. However, there was still some difference of opinion in

Barbadian society on the appropriateness of corporal punishment in the educational setting. The Government had a duty to consult wider society on proposed changes in policy and to take the opinions and concerns of its members on board.

64. The Government had undertaken a project in conjunction with the Inter-American Development Bank to create an inter-agency database to ensure the constant availability of up-to-date statistical data. Child labour was prohibited in Barbados. A committee had been set up within the public service to examine the possibility of granting paternity leave and to make recommendations to the relevant government minister, who could then submit a proposal to Parliament.

65. **Ms. Cuffy** (Barbados) said that, in Barbados, the main skills certificate was known as the Caribbean vocational qualification, which was a competency-based qualification offered to all students in the country's 22 public secondary schools. The aim of the qualification was to provide all students with the opportunity to study technical subjects at a younger age and with more career options in the future. The Ministry of Education had begun to place a greater emphasis on the study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and had committed to introducing programmes to retrain teachers in those subjects so that they were better placed to help students make informed choices about vocational training. Students who had earned their Caribbean vocational qualification were entitled to seek employment throughout the Caribbean under the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Skilled Nationals Programme.

66. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that the sexual harassment (prevention) bill was in the final stages of preparation and would be submitted to Parliament for consideration in 2017. Pregnant teenage girls usually attended school for the first five months of their pregnancy before leaving to have their baby, as continuing to attend school past that threshold could have a negative impact on their health. New mothers were entitled to return to the same school or enrol in a different school to finish their studies. Pregnancy was therefore not a bar to education and teenage girls who fell pregnant were not excluded or abandoned. No statistical data on the school dropout rate or on the number of teenage pregnancies were currently available. School attendance officers were responsible for monitoring the attendance of teenage mothers. School guidance counsellors provided teenage mothers with the necessary support as they pursued their studies.

67. Section 30 of the Employment Rights Act provided that the right of an employee not to be unfairly dismissed was contravened when the reason for dismissal was related to gender. As to compensation, unfair dismissal attracted punitive damages in addition to the standard damages provided for by law. The Ministry of Labour was in the process of drafting a bill to prevent discrimination in employment. The bill would be submitted to Parliament for consideration in 2017.

68. Wages were set by means of collective agreements in the public and private sectors and by Wages Councils. In all cases, wages were determined without distinction as to gender or other grounds. While no statistical information on the participation of women in the informal labour market was currently available, there was evidence to suggest that the number of women gaining professional qualifications and entering the market was increasing. In Barbados, self-employed persons enjoyed the same benefits and rights as government employees, such as maternity and sick leave and a pension, provided that they were properly registered and paid national insurance contributions.

69. National employment programmes tended not to be gender-specific. In the wake of the global financial crisis, the Government had encouraged men and women to seek employment in non-traditional areas and had promoted entrepreneurship through initiatives such as the youth entrepreneurship scheme. Under the scheme, young entrepreneurs received guidance and training on how to develop and secure funding for their business. Young entrepreneurs with viable business proposals could access funding through a microcredit facility without distinction as to gender.

70. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that, to her mind, the obligation for pregnant teenage girls to leave school after five months amounted to their expulsion and that the social stigma attached to early pregnancy and not concern for their health was the driver behind that policy. The State party should step up its efforts to eradicate the stereotypes associated with

early pregnancy and remove the social stigma carried by teenage mothers. The absence of a general, written policy on the procedures to be followed when a student fell pregnant was a cause for concern. The State party might consider adopting procedures to ensure consistency of treatment and the accountability of school administrators.

71. She noted with satisfaction that the State party planned to abolish corporal punishment in the near future. She asked what stage the State party had reached in revising its existing policy and when the revised policy might be adopted. While she understood the need for the State party to consult with society on proposed changes in policy, it should not be swayed by those segments of society that wished to preserve the practice. Instead, the State party should do more to promote a change in attitude towards the use of corporal punishment in schools, in keeping with its international obligations. She would also like to receive more information on the impact of the vocational and technical training provided in schools and a gender breakdown of the students participating in that training.

72. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** asked what family planning services were available to teenage girls and how prevalent contraception use was among teenage girls and adult women. The delegation might also explain how it guaranteed lesbian, bisexual and transsexual women and female sex workers access to health-care services without stigma and discrimination. She would also like to receive statistical data on the HIV prevalence rate among men and women and to learn more about the main causes of HIV transmission in the country, the availability of antiretroviral treatment and the measures in place to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

73. **Mr. Bergby** said it was not clear whether the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was applied in Barbados. He found it astonishing that private sector employers were not required to supply sex-disaggregated data on wages and wished to know whether the State party planned to make it compulsory to submit such information to the Labour Department.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.